

## New Du Quoin Boot Camp Superintendent: 'If each one would teach one'



*Newly named Du Quoin IIP superintendent Jason Henton is pictured at the entrance to the 200-inmate Du Quoin boot camp on Tuesday afternoon. This welcome sign was fashioned by inmates themselves. Henton looks forward to the work ahead of him.*

□ **By John H. Croessman** December 4, 2014

Du Quoin, Ill -- Since Superintendent Clem Campanella's retirement from the Illinois Department of Corrections Impact Incarceration Program in Du Quoin last may, Jason Henton has had the weighty role of overseeing the programs in both Dixon Springs and Du Quoin.

On Monday, he began his assignment as full-time superintendent of what we have come to know simply as the Du Quoin Boot Camp.

When the 200-inmate facility was completed in 1994 during the late Sen. Ralph Dunn's tenure it was a leap of faith that the state's corrections program could provide a gateway back into society for young offenders who deserve a second chance. It has done that.

The Du Quoin Impact Incarceration Program is a short term, paramilitary style rehabilitation program which houses 200 offenders. Du Quoin IIP functions as a boot camp, whereby eligible offenders approved by the sentencing court and accepted by the department, shall upon successful completion of the program requirements have their sentences reduced to time served between 120-180 active days. Upon successful completion, the offender serves a term of mandatory supervised release.

The center is comprised of four buildings which include the administration, multi-purpose, dormitory, and maintenance buildings contained on eight acres behind the Du Quoin State Fairgrounds. The facility is encircled by a one-third mile running track with a 14,000 sq. foot outside exercise area. To Du Quoin, it has been a good neighbor.

Moreover, the inmate population has been an invaluable work force to the Du Quoin-area, helping maintain the nearby Du Quoin State Fairgrounds, clearing winter snow from downtown Du Quoin sidewalks, helping our churches and lending a hand to projects like the Holiday Lights Fair, which opened Thanksgiving Day in Du Quoin. The inmates annually have a hand in the show's setup in the Exhibition Hall, which opens on Friday.

Supt. Henton brings a wholesome sense of purpose and a huge sense of community to his new role at the Du Quoin IIP. He has worked beside Campanella and the staff in the past. They are all friends and corrections department professionals.

His wife is a corrections staff member of 18 years and the couple has one daughter, still in school. They live within a short driving distance of Du Quoin, much shorter than the drive to the Dixon Springs facility. "I value the relationships I have developed," said Henton.

He has been with the Illinois Department of Corrections for 22 years. This career path began with his role as a correctional officer in 1992. He has held positions of lieutenant, captain, major, acting assistant warden of operations and now superintendent. His work has touched the programs at the Pinckneyville Correctional Center, the Lawrence Correctional Center and the Stateville Correctional Center. He took over as superintendent of the Dixon Springs IIP in January 2013, then shouldered the shared responsibility of the Du Quoin program in May of this year.

Supervising both programs for seven months ended recently with the appointment of Jason Hall as the new Dixon Springs superintendent.

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Corrections is serious business at all levels. In the department's own words, the mission at Du Quoin is simple: "The mission of Du Quoin Impact Incarceration Program as a minimum security facility is to provide for the protection of the public through the humane and secure incarceration of adult male offenders based upon the foundation of legislative and judicial decisions.

The institution's administration is committed toward instilling responsibility and mature decision making in its offenders by providing extensive and high-quality educational programs, work assignment opportunities, vigorous physical training, and religious avenues. The goal of the facility is to go far beyond the minimum necessities of food, sanitation, clothing, housing, and medical services to the offenders of the facility."

But, the program also has a heart.

Henton was instrumental in developing a community garden at the Dixon Springs facility and hopes to create a similar program in Du Quoin. The Du Quoin IIP benefits from its own garden, but the Dixon Springs garden program is much larger. Here's a taste of what's to come.

Students at the Vienna High School last year started the semester with more access to fresh produce thanks to a partnership with the Dixon Springs Impact Incarceration Program in Pope County.

Hundreds of pounds of green beans, tomatoes, potatoes, okra, radishes, cucumbers and even a few crates of onions have made their way to the Vienna High School cafeteria compliments of Dixon Springs' garden program.

"It takes more time to prepare fresh food, but it's much better for the children in the long run," Betty Saltzman, food service director for Vienna High School, said. "They're learning to eat better and try something a little bit different."

"It's good for the Illinois Department of Corrections as a whole to have the ability to get the positive release of assisting the communities; giving back to the communities," Henton said, adding that several inmates and staff members are from the local communities the programs are helping. "So it's really positive to see the work that is being donated, or giving back, to these areas by the inmate population here."

Henton said the garden program has doubled its size since he first arrived at Dixon Springs last year. The garden sits adjacent to the boot camp facilities covering approximately five acres. Most of the gardening is performed by the women inmates who "take a great deal of pride" in developing their "green thumbs," Henton said.

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Corrections officer Penny Poole oversees the women working in the garden and was instrumental in expanding the program last year.

“It’s not just playing in the dirt,” Poole said. “Most of our inmates are inner-city kids and have never even seen a garden, let alone work in one.”

Henton hopes the Du Quoin program makes a difference in the lives of inmates when they return home. “During graduation I always ask “each one to teach one,” he says.

He knows that some will embrace the lessons learned at the Du Quoin IIP. Others won’t. When an inmate boards the Amtrak train in Du Quoin and heads back north a measure of hope and faith goes with them.

Henton follows in the footsteps of an equally gifted corrections professional in Clem Campanella.

Clem took over the Du Quoin IIP in September 1999 where he had been serving as supervisor for four years from the time the facility was opened. He served more than 25 years in IDOC and was recognized as a very capable and reliable corrections professional. He actually started as a correctional officer in 1988.

IDOC Chief of Public Safety Brad Curry said this week, “Clem Campanella served the Department ably and honorably. His work at the Du Quoin camp had a positive effect on countless lives. He was, is and will always be appreciated.”

One of Campanella’s most recent projects was partnering with the Illinois Department of Transportation to fill and warehouse sandbags at the Du Quoin State Fairgrounds for use during spring flooding. Inmates filled 12,000 sandbags in two days, easily trucked and unloaded where they are needed.

(Our appreciation to Tom Shaer, communications director of the Illinois Department of Corrections for his assistance.)